No 11 #8

Jesse Young of Pennsylvania

On the Local Origin of Diseased Action

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II

Of all the subjects which have engaged the attention of the historian, there is none more interesting to the student of medicine, than the history of his profession - In reviewing it, he sees theory after theory arising, and by turns swaying the sceptre of the medical world for a time, and finally passing away, leaving only the wreck of a name, and a remembrance of their once high reputation - These, although they have been abandoned, and are now regarded only as monuments of the ingenuity of their authors, teach us an useful lesson; they stand as beacons, warning succeeding generations, that the positions to which they

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lead, have been assumed, but have been found defective, and hence given up - Nor need we be surprized that so many revolutions in opinion should have taken place - In every art, or science, important improvements are the result of slow & patient investigation; and most frequently, of what may be called, negative experience - It very seldom happens, in the abstruse sciences, that correct principles are assumed at once - We are mostly led to the truth by wandering through a labyrinth of errors; "many observations must first be made, and the labour of much searching & examining gone through, before we can have proper materials to build on. Yet these are the hard conditions, upon which the knowledge of natural causes, is to be obtained" - These observations apply particularly to the science of medicine - Including within its comprehensive bounds, a more extensive range of objects for contemplation than perhaps any other science; any thing like accuracy,

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or correctness of principles, must indeed be the result of "many observations", of "much searching & ~~examining~~". Accordingly we find, that as observations were extended, improvements were made in theory & in practice; that the phenomena of many diseases which could not be accounted for by preceding, were readily explained by succeeding theorists; and that of many diseases explained by the former, could be more satisfactorily explained by the latter. In this march of our science, centuries have rolled away, and we are still obliged to confess ourselves "miserably ignorant" in many particulars belonging to the profession. In reviewing the theories of some of the older writers, we cannot but admire the ingenuity with which they are propounded; but at the same time, we cannot but admit that they are vague & unsatisfactory; that they do not ~~admit of~~ lead directly to any correct or rational practice; & that they were altogether inadequate to the explanation of the phenomena of many diseases: hence much of the practice predicated thereon, must have borde-

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closely on empiricism - "Theory is one thing, & practice is another" & theory can be of no use whatever, when it runs counter to, or does not lead to a correct practice - If then, in theorizing, we are compelled to make use of indefinite terms to effect our purpose, such terms must convey indefinite ideas, and we might just as well have no theory at all, as such an one; because, theory never did, nor never will cure any disease - — Simplicity is one of the grand characteristics of nature - The means she makes use of to produce the most complicated results, are few & simple, and may be easily comprehended, if we proceed no faster in our inquiries, than we have data founded upon observation, to proceed upon - But if we have not sufficient materials with which to proceed, we might just as well, (as respects real good resulting), confess our ignorance, and say we can proceed no farther, as to engage the imagination in framing terms to which we can affix no precise ideas, to bear us out of our difficulties -

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Luxuriance of imagination may befit the poet: but to the grave & reflecting philosopher belongs not flights of fancy - When he beholds Nature attired in her "loveliest array": or when he sees the majesty of Nature's God in storms, or "hears it in the wind" he is not transported on the wings of visionary fancy, beyond the bounds of Reason: he calmly surveys the scenery: he sees the effect & infers the cause: he considers the present appearances as only the effect of a greater cause "Tile step by step with an aspiring trod,

He climb from Nature, to the throne of God".

It is very judiciously remarked by Doctor Clarke in his treatise upon peccipeal fever, that if medical writers had confined themselves more to observation, & depended less upon speculation, many diseases which are now reckoned amongst the opprobria medicorum, would have readily yielded to the resources of our art, and we, instead of beholding them at this late date as enemies bidding defiance to our utmost endeavours to overcome them, should have had the satisfac-

[illegible] of seeing them prostrate themselves before our means, and yielding themselves as trophies justly due the efficacy of the healing art! — But [illegible] [illegible] is more depended on than it ought to be. The [illegible] [illegible] than formerly. The medical world seems now to acquiesce in the opinion that a more distinct knowledge of disease, or of diseased action, is necessary, in order to account for, and to place on a consistent footing the present state of physiological science. It is from that many practical facts, are now in the present state of knowledge altogether incompatible with any of the old theories, or at least that they may be accounted for in a satisfactory, consistent with later observations. If then, we thus go on, correcting theory by practice, [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to [illegible] [illegible] that [illegible] the power of human skill is [illegible] — [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] on the [illegible] of Operative Surgery, [illegible] by the insoluble

ist of reference, will fall to rank among the sister sciences and shine among them as the brightest luminary in the constellation; other sciences having in view the benefit of the commonwealth of man; and his health, his life, his all. Let it be calculated then as a tender plant, let it be nursed by benevolent hands, let it be watered by assiduous application, and it will not fail recompensing us for the labour we may bestow upon it. —"

That there are some diseases, most certainly, the longest of life, a nature, & causes the nervous system from mal formation &c &c which can never be cured I am sorry that I am compelled to admit, but that there are more than we are sometimes led to suspect, if the testimony of authors, I believe, is to be credited, I am also well convinced. — Fautrow, Sherwin, Hey, Hamilton & Hey, furnish instances in healing the gout, as the result of many cases such cannot be found in numerous late works than that the patient was without intemperance or entirely innocent the most prudent which has come, could never have saved the

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[illegible]

[illegible] of the physicians that [illegible] the [illegible]
effect of the heart had taken place, but that it had not [illegible]
to admitted by all the [illegible] medicines [illegible]
[illegible] at. The early history of this case I am unacquain-
ted with but I think some light may be thrown upon the pa-
thology of the [illegible] disease, from its termination [illegible]
I think, rationally [illegible] that a vigorous [illegible] is, sometimes
at least a disease of sympathy. This doctrine is inculcated
by Dr Chapman in his lectures and it will receive some
support, if further be needed from this — the [illegible] stage
the only [illegible] point which is that it is part of the sto-
mach extending to the lungs — In fact the case be
fore us, is of a full plethoric habit increasing to congestion
of; and after the [illegible] attacks, the bleeding [illegible] was carried
to its full extent, the Cathartics diaphoretics &c were
repeated at short intervals; the antiphlogistic medicines
used, but without avail — The rather Dr Smith's medicines
would have had no effect on the early stage of this
case, from ignorance of point given for them, but in this
it may, the remedies could never have reached the affection

[illegible] just have been written in the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] known that [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

making an infraction [illegible] diseases which [illegible] consumption, [illegible] remedy. —

[illegible] it is customary [illegible] the [illegible] many quotations from other substantiating opinions adduced, I have not [illegible] consequently have contented myself to the bare mention of [illegible] facts [illegible] that which support my opinions; I [illegible] Armstrong on Typhus [illegible] Cyclopaedia, [illegible] & a variety of other approved, well as many foreign works I might write [illegible] quote a volume [illegible] the [illegible] of medicines [illegible] treatment [illegible] Epilepsy, [illegible] Hysteria, Delirium [illegible] Marasmus, Incipient Ophthalmia, [illegible] &c. — But [illegible] precautions [illegible]

readers [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [

[illegible] of the symptoms; that it was a [illegible], perhaps [illegible] to the [illegible] the patient particularly, until by its continuance, other more alarming symptoms have supervened, on the first shift is lost, either has [illegible] a [illegible]. But this is actually the case perhaps 9 times in 10 where no serious cause can be assigned. I think men are absent without danger or running, consider fatal consequences, because [illegible], or avoid it. But this is impossible in the course of nature of things. It is a physiological fact, that the [illegible] of the system must be [illegible] to the [illegible]. But this is not [illegible] a straight [illegible], perhaps [illegible] in to [illegible] the laws, the [illegible] disorders, hence derangement, in this way, may take place in the patient not [illegible] but [illegible] all right. Now every person acquainted with the laws of Physiology, and more particularly with the Physiology of digestion, secretion, absorption & nutrition will at then receive satisfactory information, on what is common occurrence. But so long as this is not the case [illegible] with, the information we receive, notwithstanding it be perfectly [illegible], although even in the [illegible]

[illegible] & crude manner – but soon after I commenced the practice of medicine I [illegible] to regard the first passages, [illegible] as a symptom of disease, but as merely an incidental or consequent, not as a primary symptom, I was not to attach any thing like primary importance to it – When I [illegible] years after, in my studies I had enlarged my views of disease, & of disease in [illegible], I began to entertain a different idea of the subject, and in our daily discussions with the inventors of these [illegible] I have [illegible] the contest with their views respecting disease, and I [illegible] in that my latter opinions were much nearer the truth, as evinced in practice, than my former opinion –

It is remarkable, that the judicious Dr. Hamilton, that in his work on the [illegible] of Dermatology, diseases should always commence with these symptoms, and not make their appearance – if it were particularly attended to by authors, much benefit would most undoubtedly result from it, [illegible]; but in this point most authors "err widely" – As an example – from [illegible] in [illegible] to a student in the description, I find by no means uncommon, that even in [illegible] diseases given by Dr. Hamilton, than that by Dr. Thomas, who follows Cullen

pretty closely in many particulars - The cause of this disease known likewise by the name of green sickness seems to be a want of power in the system arising from weakness, to propel the blood into the uterine vessels with a force sufficient to open their extremities so as to allow a discharge of blood from them, but the origin of this peculiar weakness which appears at this particular period of life, we are wholly unacquainted with - Some have referred it to a certain state affection of the ovaria, between which and the uterine vessels there is a strong connexion" - Its symptomatology is as follows - "Heaviness, listlessness to motion, fatigue on the least exercise, palpitation at the heart, pain in the back, loins & hips, flatulence & acidities in the stomach & bowels, [illegible] retention of the menses" &c &c -

2. A [illegible] [illegible] first attention to the history of the disease [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. The [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] of the [illegible], [illegible] in the back, defective appetite & imperfect digestion - These precede a sufficient supply of nourishment at a period of growth [illegible] it is not [illegible], flabbiness, laxity, flaccidity, nervous symptoms, wasting of muscular fibre, languor, debility, retention of the menses

[illegible] the [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] to page [illegible] to 81.

He gave the symptoms as follows "[illegible] excellent o[illegible] [illegible] of [illegible] preceded by costiveness which continues throughout the disease" The complexion [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the eye. Gums become pale. the eyes dull & [illegible] -

Dr Thomas makes [illegible] observation [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] Dr H's [illegible] of the disease - He [illegible] the opinion that Dr J. did not [illegible] with Dr H in his strictures at least, or else he would not have [illegible] "the [illegible] of the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]" - It may appear [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] Dr J. or [illegible], but perhaps the authority of Hamilton is not less than his & I cannot but agree with the latter - I have [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] successfully. It was [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] of the latter gentleman. I attacked them & I found little or no difficulty in managing them - Again, it is a fact agreed by Dr H & admitted by Dr J.

that a prevention of costiveness, or an "assistance of nature when she is deficient in keeping up a constant regular state of evacuation" will prevent the accession of the disease – What strong proof then need we want of the [illegible] of its origin?

[illegible] allow to the [illegible] Dr. Smith – [illegible] Hitherto, just [illegible], perhaps may not be surprising – Dr. Smith's that [illegible] taken in the intestines [illegible] one of the most tremendous diseases human nature is liable to: I allude to Tetanus – Dr. Chapman in his Med. Lectures mentions a case which fell within his own observation – He mentions that he was called to a [illegible] Market Street, & finds him labouring under tetanus; he ascertains that he has been eating [illegible] quantity of the stones of this fruit from the [illegible] tree in the course of an hour [illegible] (I write from recollection.) the boy was so well as to go home [illegible] – If this such a cause is capable of producing such an effect, in [illegible] what may it not produce? Need we be at all surprised at the intestinal irritation giving rise at times in different constitutions to one of the [illegible] diseases that are

met with in practice, when no obvious cause can be [illegible]. Is not the above a fact calculated for making a decided [illegible]ion on the mind of every one who undertakes the management of [illegible]. It proves not [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] -

Another case which fell within my own knowledge (I will here relate) - Mrs. H. was [illegible] in the Spring of 182[illegible] with her first attack, she was [illegible] [illegible] instruments [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] was performed. For some months after the case [illegible] left [illegible] with [illegible] of [illegible] left leg [illegible] from the hip to the toes, - so severe as to incapacitate her from applying it to the floor - A great variety of [illegible] were employed by 2 or 3 Country practitioners without affording any relief - She then applied to Dr. Humphrey now of this city - He commenced Fowler's solution, after using it some time a most violent vomiting came on which lasted nearly 24 hours; it subsided & she immediately became convalescent, and soon got entirely well - This case might admit of considerable speculation, as whether it was the vomiting, or the impression of the arsenic on the system or both conjoint, which effected the cure? This I shall not endeavour to decide upon. I am however inclined to believe from the appearance of the matter [illegible] [illegible] having the least [illegible] [illegible] before the vomiting took place ejected & that perhaps Tart of Antimony might have produced

the same effect. Although I am to them an advocate for the removal of irritation from the stomach & bowels, I dare not be understood as insisting that I can cure disease by simple remedies, & prescribing; the contrary [illegible] can be more distant than I am from the notion of a mere discriminating or adjustment of other remedies to meet the indications which may be present. Thus we have [illegible] the state of the system requires it; in one case stimulants, tonics, anti-spasmodics &c &c as may be required. What I would imply is, that a great variety of diseases [illegible] are [illegible] by giving an particularly strong opinion that the relation in which most with much less difficulty in their management than are [illegible] or as on prescribing for the [illegible] symptoms without attention to their intimately concerned parts. [illegible] a great many diseases to which the attention of the practitioner is called [illegible] immediately upon restoring the bowels to their regular functions, this I have observed repeatedly in a number of instances. Even in Typhus Fever, a disease which of all others, we should [illegible] be inclined to give purgatives in, we have ample testimony to their beneficial effects; and in many of the exanthemata where the action of the system runs low & seems to tend to typhus Dr. Hamilton

I passed them [illegible] in the [illegible] function, [illegible] by some writers so much dreaded by others, neither have I observed a revulsion from the surface [illegible] consequent immediate fading, in common language striking in [illegible] the efflorescence, from the [illegible] exciting [illegible]. This fact [illegible] demonstrate a positive [illegible] that the "functions of the skin" depends upon the brain [illegible] with the alimentary canal, irritated by crudities, are propagated by the sympathetic nerves? –

That the stomach & bowels become deranged from a great variety of causes, is admitted by everyone; what other diseases are thus produced will not be denied by many; but whether we should not be led in many cases, where we can hardly suspect from any symptoms ~~[illegible]~~ ~~there~~ ~~[illegible]~~ look beyond them for material primary affection, is a question which may admit of some doubt – [illegible] the peculiar structure of the liver; on the very important utility of the liver, & its in carrying on the functions of the chylopoietic viscera, on the very great diversity of symptoms which have appeared in cases where post mortem examinations have shown it to be the only viscera materially affected, and in the very frequent congestions & chronic diseases have shown to exist at the terminations of a great

variety of diseases. I think we may infer that in the treatment of many very many diseases, we can scarcely be too attentive in diseases in general, so as to act, in part at least upon this organ. It is exceedingly vascular and its bile is to become deranged in its functions, and a derangement of its functions must of necessity derange the economy of the system & disease must be the consequence. The causes affecting it are very various. As any of the more recent poisons; depletion; perspiration; highly stimulating potations taken into the stomach, wounds in the region of the liver or on distant parts. Thus Dr. Gibson in a drawing on Abscess of this organ gave blows on the back as an exciting cause, protracted Intermittents &c &c. It is also observed by Armstrong that when the Brain is affected the Liver will usually be much disturbed at the same time. Many extracts from different works might be quoted to show that the liver is intimately concerned in the pathology of many diseases, but of its primary importance, authors do not seem to be decided, perhaps more observations are necessary. The remarks made by Dr. Hamilton, will then perhaps apply, as forcibly as on the former occasion;

viz. that authors generally do not give the symptoms in the order they appear - Had this been particularly attended to, much less would remain to be done, at this date, in the advancement of the science, than now does -

Whether it be primarily or subsequently effected remains perhaps for further observations to determine - Speculatory & arguments I have heretofore disavowed my intention of entering into, hence I shall dismiss the subject without further notice — " — " — " — " — " —

The foregoing observations contain my views of the subject I have selected for my purpose - Throughout, my object has been to avoid prolixity - To unite perspicuity with conciseness has been my particular aim - Much more might have been written - Indeed it might have been extended to a volume of considerable magnitude; but the brief remarks contained have been deemed sufficient, to answer the purpose of an essay of this nature - That I have not done that justice to the subjects touched at, which they deserve, I feel a consciousness,

but inexperience must be my apology in a great measure
The subject is nearly new, and to treat it as it merits, requires profound judgment; ample experience; and much observation! - In reflecting upon it in this light, I feel a consolatory hope that it will not be criticised so severely, as if it were the work of one better qualified, by than requisites, for the performance of so difficult a task — " — " — " — Since the foregoing was written, a very remarkable case fell within my observation, which I cannot but notice - On Sunday Sept. 15th Inst I was called to Mrs S. who had lost the power of speech since Saturday at 1 Oclock P.M. - On inquiring into the history of this case, I prescribed 20 grs Ipecac. & 3 of Tart. Ant. given at once. It operated very severely as an Emetic. I left 30 grs Jalap & 10 of Calomel to be given in 4 hours after the operation of the Emetic - It also operated powerfully as a Cathartic, & on Monday on visiting her, I had the satisfaction of having answers from herself to my questions - I learnt that soon after the Cathartic began to operate, her power of speech returned but that she had been severely convulsed a number of times; this I attributed in part to the powerful medicines she had taken; I accordingly ordered some Laudanum given; The convulsions did not return, & she now remains in perfect health